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Uncle Sam's Heroes Of The Surf



Dr. WILLIAM A. NEWELL
FOUNDER OF THE LIFE SAVING SERVICE

When the Lord breathes His wrath
above the bosom of the waters,
When the rollers are a-poundin' on
the shore,
When the mariner's a-thinkin' of his
wife and son and daughters,
And the little home he'll, maybe, see
no more;
When the bars are white and yeasty and
the shoals are all a-frothin',
When the wild no'theaster's cuttin'
like a knife,
Through the seethin' roar and screech
he's patrolin' on the beach—
The Gov'ment's hired man fer savin'
life.

—Joe Lincoln.

Today Uncle Sam's hired men for saving life endangered by storms on the coast patrol the beaches from Quoddy Head on the North Atlantic to Cape Disappointment on the North Pacific, and are also to be found on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico and the Great Lakes, swept by storms as fierce as any that ever raged on the Atlantic. Upwards of two thousand men strain their eyes and ears out to sea every minute of the day and night; and nearly ever hour that passes these winter days, somewhere along the storm-beaten coasts the members of saving crews are risking their own lives to save shipwrecked fellow beings, or putting forth every human effort possible to warn them that go down to the deep in ships

away from destruction on hidden reef and sunken bar.

Since the day when Uncle Sam began to employ coast guards, his heroes of the surf have saved upwards of a quarter of million lives. Under the present system of life saving, dating from 1871, they have attended fifteen thousand disasters, and out of the 105,000 lives involved they have been able to save all except one in every hundred. As secondary work, of the \$225,000,000 worth of property imperilled, they have saved an amount valued at \$175,000,000. No other life saving service of the world can point to a record anywhere near comparable to this in epic grandeur. A moment spent in reflection on these statistics will reveal the transcendental heroism back of them. On one hand, the combined elements, in their fiercest mood, roaring destruction; on the other, a handful of men in oils and sou'west-

ters—a crew of six or seven men; and in the average instance, the little band of fighters overwhelmingly victorious. Where is the much vaunted heroism of battle when compared with the unseen heroism that takes place in the black night on some lonely strip of beach? For while one is the excited heroism of destruction, the other is the calm heroism of salvation.

The Government spends annually

about \$1,750,000 for the maintenance of the service. This is less than one-fourth of the property value saved from the sea in the same period, to say nothing of the lives saved. Each succeeding year finds the sum set aside by the Government for life saving somewhat augmented; the first appropriation called for \$5,000. This was made in 1847, and with it the keepers of light houses along the Atlantic coast were furnished with

means to render assistance in case of ship wrecks. The life saving service proper was not really instituted until the following year, when an appropriation of \$10,000 was made for the establishment of eight life saving stations on the New Jersey coast between Sandy Hook and Little Egg Harbor.

And right here let the man who was most instrumental in securing this appropriation—the man who is, therefore, the founder of the life saving service—tell how he came to conceive the idea of the service. It is a story little known yet it forms an interesting chapter in the history of federal life saving. Thus it is told by Dr. William A. Newell, who, though well along in the eighties, until recently was actively practicing medicine in Allentown, N. J.:

"My identification with the life sav-

ing system of the United States was the result of a marine disaster I happened to view during the summer of 1839,

when an Australian brig, the *Monmouth*, was wrecked near the Mansion House Inlet, when the thirteen in number, whose bodies washed up

"The wreck occurred vessel struck a sandbar yards from shore, and force of the violent surf, upon the beach, tide receded, she lay dry. The sailors were endeavoring to swim bar, where the vessel time, and the bodies tered along the beach mile.

"The bow of the brig and close to the shore had ceased, the idea upon my mind that sailors might be could have been

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